



COMHALTAS

CHILD PROTECTION & CODE OF BEHAVIOUR POLICY

For

Comeraghs Comhaltas



Na Comaraigh CCÉ

**Promoting the Development of Traditional
Music, Song, Dance and the Irish Language.**

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Comeraghs Comhaltas Officers 2013/2014

Chairman	Micheál Marrinan
Vice Chairman	Martin Mannion
Secretary	Valerie O’Gorman
Assistant Secretary	Becky O’Keeffe
Treasurer	Noel Power
PRO	Rose Power
Assistant PRO	Richard Hill
Auditor	Helen Kiely
Youth Officer	Eimear Fahey
Irish Officer	Anne Kelly
Child Officer	Mairéad Fahey
Designated Liaison Person (DLP)	Mairéad Fahey
Events Officer	Mary Jean Timmins
Delegates for the County Board	Valerie O’Gorman Becky O’Keeffe

Contact information for:

Micheál Marrinan	0873638002
Valerie O’Gorman	0877737716
Rose Power	0876127052
Mairéad Fahey	0879153802
Comeraghs Comhaltas	0879898363

N.B. All other officers can be contacted via Comeraghs Comhaltas Branch mobile phone.

Comeragh Comhaltas Senior Teachers 2013/2014

Brendan Clancy	Fiddle – Banjo – Tin Whistle – Guitar
Eimear Fahey	Concertina – Fiddle – Harp
Marian Clancy	Flute – Tin Whistle – Concertina
Ciara Buck	Whistle – Fiddle – Fiddle – Concertina
Tomás O’Gealbháin	Button Accordion
Danielle Lonergan	Fiddle
Geraldine O’Callaghan	Advanced Fiddle
Mairéad Fahey	Advanced Fiddle
Karen Fennell	Fiddle – Tin Whistle

Comeragh Comhaltas Junior Teachers 2013/2014

Seán Kearney	Button Accordion
Nicole Lonergan	Fiddle
Clara Mannion	Tin Whistle – Concertina
Claire Fennell	Tin Whistle - Flute
Shannon Kearney	Uilleann Pipes – Tin Whistle
Sarah O’Gorman	Fiddle
Daniel O’Keeffe	Banjo
Hannah Power	Fiddle
Emily Cox	Concertina – Tin Whistle – Flute
Ryan O’Keeffe	Concertina
Sally Cox	Tin Whistle - Banjo

Comeragh Comhaltas Dance Teachers 2013/2014

Deirdre Kiely	Step Dancing
Marianne Ryan	Set & Céilí Dancing

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Guidelines & Procedures in respect of Branch Involvement with Children and Young Persons

Note: A child or young person is defined as any person under 18 years.

INTRODUCTION

COMHALTAS CEOLTÓIRÍ ÉIREANN fully recognises its responsibilities for Child Protection. Our policy applies to all staff, branch members, volunteers, teachers, etc (hereinafter ALL referred to as “members”) working with the organisation.

COMHALTAS is an international organisation with many year’s experience in passing on our cultural traditions to younger generations through music, song, dance and the Irish language.

As a COMHALTAS member, staff or volunteer it is important to understand that you are in a position of responsibility, authority and trust with respect to the young people you may work with or come in contact with in the course of Comhaltas related activities.

The welfare of children and young people with whom Comhaltas works, their health and well being and their best interests are considered paramount.

Comhaltas members are required to adhere to the Policy, Procedures and Code of Practice in the exercise of their duties.

This document is written to ensure that working with Comhaltas in whatever capacity will be a safe and enjoyable experience for all involved.

POLICY STATEMENT

- The health, safety and well being of all our children and young people are of paramount importance to all the workers and volunteers who are a part of Comhaltas. Our children have the right to protection, regardless of age, gender, race, culture or disability. They have a right to be safe in all our activities.
- In our activities we value our children and young people. A culture of mutual respect between children and those who represent the organisation in all its activities will be encouraged with adults modelling good practice in this context.
- Comhaltas recognises that good child protection policies and procedures are of benefit to everyone involved with our work, including staff, branch officers, members and volunteers, as these policies can help protect them from erroneous or malicious allegations.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This policy ensures that staff, branch members and volunteers are clear about the actions necessary with regard to child protection issues.

Its aims are:

- To raise the awareness of all - staff, branch members and volunteers and to identify responsibility in reporting possible cases of abuse.
- To ensure effective communication between staff, branch members and volunteers when dealing with child protection issues.
- To lay down the correct procedures for those who encounter an issue of child protection.

LEGISLATION:

*Under **The Child Care Act of 1991 and Children First – National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children -1999, 2009,2011** voluntary sector organisations such as ours have a statutory duty of care for the children and young people to whom we provide services.*

The principle, which should inform best practice in child protection, is that the welfare of the child is of paramount importance.

“All organisations, whether statutory or voluntary, have an overall corporate responsibility to safeguard children, and should pay particular attention to;

- *Safe and clearly defined methods of selecting staff and volunteers.*
- *Developing effective procedures for the reporting and management of child protection concerns.*
- *Identifying a designated staff member/volunteer to act as a liaison with outside agencies and as a resource person to any staff member or volunteer who has child protection concerns. The designated person will be responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse to the HSE (Health Service Executive) and/or An Garda Síochána. (Children First – National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children – 1999 & 2009)*

RATIONALE

- To adopt a Policy and Code Of Practice on safeguarding the welfare of Children
- To plan the work of the Organisation so as to eliminate situations where the abuse of a child may occur
- To apply agreed procedures for protecting children to all members and volunteers
- To use supervision as a means of protecting children
- To ensure that staff, branch members and volunteers are aware of this Policy, Code of Practice and Child Protection procedures to be followed.

FOUR ELEMENTS:

1. We establish a safe environment in which Children can learn, perform and develop:

- a. We create an environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to communicate and are listened to.
- b. We ensure children know that there are adults in Comhaltas whom they can approach if they have concerns.
- c. We ensure that adult members of Comhaltas, and other adults working with Comhaltas, possess an understanding of the responsibility placed on the organisation for child protection by stating its obligation in this policy.

2. We raise awareness of the child protection issues among members and co-workers:

- a. We ensure every member in contact with children is aware of this Policy and Procedures/guidelines and are aware of their inherent responsibilities.
- b. We raise awareness of the Child Protection Policy with all members, parents, tutors and supervisors.

3. We practise safe recruitment and check the suitability of staff/teachers:

a. We recognise the importance of checking the background of teachers (music, singing, dancing, etc) and others before they are given responsibility to work with children. Comhaltas, as a voluntary organisation, has registered with the GCVU, An Garda Síochána Central Vetting Unit. Current best practice requires that all adults working with children in Éire receive garda vetting.

4. We implement Procedures in respect of suspect alleged or confirmed cases of abuse:

a. We recognise that members may in some instances have cause for concern. Should the latter occur guidance should be sought from the DLP and liaise with statutory agencies, namely the HSE (Health Service Executive) and An Garda Síochána.

b. We will maintain effective links with the relevant agencies and cooperate with any enquiry regarding child protection matters.

c. We will follow child protection procedures where an allegation is made against a member/volunteer. (Refer to “Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children” (1999 & 2009) – Government Publications.

DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON (DLP):

A Designated Liaison Person will be nominated by each Comhaltas Branch each year. The **D.L.P** has the responsibility for managing child protection issues within the branch. The role and responsibilities of the DLP are:

- To implement and promote the unit’s Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- To act as the main contact for child protection within the branch.
- To provide information and advice on child protection for the branch membership.
- To create awareness of the importance of child protection.
- To communicate with members on child protection issues.
- To keep abreast of developments and understand the most recent information on related issues – data protection, confidentiality, legal and other, that impact on child protection.
- To encourage good practice and support of the procedures involved.
- To maintain confidential records of reported cases and the action taken and to liaise with the statutory agencies and ensure that they have access to all necessary information.
- To regularly monitor and review the branch Policy and Procedures

Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998

This act was passed on 23rd Jan 1999. The main provisions of the act are:

- The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse “reasonably and in good faith” to designated officers of the HSE or An Garda Síochána.
- The creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report “knowing that statement to be false”
- “ A person shall not be liable in damages in respect of the communication, whether in writing or otherwise, by him or her to an appropriate person of his or her opinion that
 1. A child has been or is being assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused, or
 2. A child’s health, development or welfare has been or is being avoidably impaired or neglected, unless it is proved that he or she has not acted reasonably and in good faith in forming that opinion and communicating it to the appropriate person”
 3. Unless it is proved that he or she has not acted reasonably and in good faith in forming that opinion and communicating it to the appropriate person”

PROCEDURES:

1. If a member of Comhaltas receives an allegation, or has a suspicion that a child is being abused, he or she must, in the first instance, consult with the branch DLP. If the concern is about the DLP, please report issue to the branch Chairman.
2. It is important that the suspicions or allegations are recorded by the DLP.
3. In cases where an allegation is made, the DLP must report the matter immediately to the relevant authorities, ie. the designated officer in the HSE or to An Garda Síochána.
4. It is essential that at all times the matter is treated in a confidential manner.
5. It is NOT the responsibility of the DLP or any other person to find a resolution or discuss the matter with anyone else except the appropriate agencies.
6. All advice proffered by the HSE and An Garda Síochána should be strictly adhered to.
7. From this point on, only the Statutory Authorities should deal with the matter.

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Code of Behaviour for Teachers/Volunteers

Teachers/volunteers (where applicable) involved in traditional music, song, dance and the Irish language are expected to:

- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every young person.
- Treat each young person equally regardless of age, gender, ability, ethnic origin, cultural background or religion.
- Be positive during lessons so that pupils always leave with a sense of achievement.
- Recognise the development needs and capacity of all pupils, regardless of their ability. (Personal development and satisfaction should have priority over competition).
- Do not shout at or lecture pupils or reprimand /ridicule them when they make a mistake. (Children learn best through trial and error. They should not be afraid to risk error to learn).
- Never use any form of corporal punishment or physical force.
- It's important to recognise that certain situations e.g. horse play/role play/telling jokes etc –could be misinterpreted and lead to allegations of serious misconduct or impropriety.
- Disallow pupils any inappropriate usage of mobile phones during lesson time.
- Avoid any unnecessary contact (Refer to Appendix 2) when assisting pupils to perform a technique in music, song, dance etc.
- Set realistic – stretching but achievable – performance goals. Praise and reinforce effort/commitment and provide positive feedback.
- Do not have a situation where you are alone in a classroom room with a pupil. (If this matter should arise a committee member should be notified immediately).
- Do not communicate individually through text/multimedia with children & young people without the consent of the parent/guardian. Once consent is given this should be done through group communication only.

Teachers/volunteers (where applicable) involved in traditional music, song, dance and the Irish language should lead by example:

- Never use foul or provocative language.
- Do not consume alcohol or non prescribed drugs immediately, prior to or while pupils are in your care.
- Avoid smoking in the presence of young people.
- Encourage parents/guardians to become involved wherever possible.
- Be punctual and properly attired.
- Plan and prepare appropriately for each lesson.
- Avoid using mobile phones during lesson times.

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Code of Behaviour for Children

Children & Young People involved in traditional music, song, dance and the Irish language are entitled to:

- Be safe and feel safe.
- Have fun and experience a sense of enjoyment and fulfilment.
- Be treated with respect, dignity and sensitivity.
- Comment and make suggestions in a constructive manner.
- Be afforded appropriate confidentiality.
- Participate in sessions, concerts, competitions and any other activities the branch may be involved in, at levels with which they feel comfortable and suits their experience.
- Make their concerns known and have them dealt with in an appropriate manner.

Children & Young People involved in traditional music, song, dance and the Irish language should always:

- Do their best and enjoy themselves.
- Make sure they properly equipped for their lesson, eg instrument, music folder, recorder etc.
- Respect other members regardless of ability, ethnic origin, cultural background or religion.
- Support other members regardless of whether they do well or not.
- Respect all teachers and voluntary helpers.
- Ensure that their teacher/committee member is informed in advance if they are unable to attend their lesson.
- Know that it is acceptable to talk to the Branch Children's Officer/DLP with any concerns or questions they may have.
- Tell somebody else if they or others have been harmed in any way.
- Adhere to acceptable standards of behaviour.
- Take care of their instruments, whether on loan or personally owned.
- Respect all venues/classrooms and their contents.

Children & Young People involved in traditional music, song, dance and the Irish language should never:

- Shout at or argue with a teacher, voluntary worker, class mate etc.
- Use unfair or bullying tactics to gain advantage or isolate other members.
- Spread rumours, by word of mouth, social media etc.
- Tell lies about adults or other young people.
- Use unacceptable language or racial and/or sectarian references.
- Run, climb or partake in any other activity between lessons that may cause harm to themselves or others.
- Use mobile phones inappropriately during lesson time.

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Code of Behaviour for Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians involved in traditional music, song, dance and the Irish language are expected to:

- Complete and return branch registration form promptly.
- Deliver and collect children punctually.
- Ensure child is properly attired for their lesson, eg instrument, music folder, recorder etc.
- Ensure appropriate and comfortable clothing is worn.
- Detail any relevant health concerns pertaining to the child on the consent/registration form.
- Ensure that teacher/committee member is informed in advance if your child is unable to attend their lesson.
- Inform the teacher beforehand if the child is to be collected early.
- Encourage the child to practice between lessons.
- Encourage all children's efforts, listen and be positive.
- Appreciate and respect your child's teacher.
- Be realistic.
- Supervise children before and after lessons.
- Ensure your child does not partake in any activity that may cause harm to themselves or others eg. running, climbing, boisterous playing etc.

Parents/Guardians have the right to:

- Know their child is safe.
- Be informed of problems or concerns relating to their child.
- Be informed if the child is unhappy in any situation.
- Contribute to decisions within the Comeraghs Comhaltas Branch
- Complain if there is concern about the standard of teaching.

Please Note: *Comeraghs Comhaltas Child Protection & Code of Behaviour Policy will be revised and updated if deemed necessary. (Published November 2012)*

Appendix 1: Definitions of abuse

There are four main categories of abuse as outlined in Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children. The following is a synopsis of the information contained in that document. For the full definitions please refer to Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 1993.

1. Neglect

“Neglect can be defined as being where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, medical care....The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child’s needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well-being and/or development are severely affected.” (Children First p.31)

2. Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse usually happens where there is a relationship between a carer and a child rather than as a specific incident or incidents. “Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms.” (Children First p.31) Rather, it can manifest in the child’s behaviour or physical functioning. Examples of these include ‘anxious’ attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement and uncooperative or hostile behaviour. “The threshold of significant harm is reached when interaction is predominantly abusive and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.” (Children First p.32)

Examples of emotional abuse in children include:

- Imposition of negative attributes on children, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;
- Emotional unavailability by the child’s parent/carer;
- Unresponsiveness, inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of the child;
- Premature imposition of responsibility on the child;
- Unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the child’s capacity to understand something or to behave and control him/herself in a certain way;
- Under or over-protection of the child;
- Use of unreasonably harsh discipline;
- Exposure to domestic violence.

3. Physical abuse

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child.

Examples of physical injury include the following:

- Shaking;

- Use of excessive force in handling;
- Deliberate poisoning;
- Suffocation;
- Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant physical harm to a child.

4. Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves the use of a child for gratification or sexual arousal by a person for themselves or others.

Examples of sexual abuse include:

- Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child;
- Intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;
- Masturbation in the presence of the child or involvement of the child in an act of masturbation;
- Sexual intercourse with a child whether oral, vaginal or anal;
- Sexual exploitation of a child... may also include showing sexually explicit material to children which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse;
- Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an under-age person.

Appendix 2 General Conduct

IT IS IMPERATIVE that in all dealings with the children in our care a balance is struck between the rights of the child and the need for intervention. As a general rule any physical contact between the branch personnel and the child should be in response to the needs of the child and not the needs of the adult. While physical contact can be used to comfort, reassure or assist a child the following should be factors in assessing its appropriateness:

- it is acceptable to the child concerned
- it is open and not secretive
- it is appropriate to the age and developmental stage of the child

Branch personnel should not do things of a personal nature for a child which the child can do for him/herself.

Appendix 3 One-to-one teaching

PROVIDED IT IS DEEMED APPROPRIATE for an individual one-to-one teaching may be provided. Branches need to weigh up the benefits of this against the possible disadvantages in relation to a child protection issue. Every effort should be made to ensure the protection of children and staff. It is crucial that clear boundaries are put in place regarding physical environment (e.g. vision panel in door), seating arrangements, proper timetabling etc. IF A CHILD NEEDS one-to-one teaching parents should be advised of any arrangements in place.